

REMARKS

Claims 12-16 now stand in the application, claims 1-11 having been canceled and new claims 12-16 added. Reconsideration of the application and allowance of all claims are respectfully requested in view of the above amendments and the following remarks.

A certified copy of the French priority document was submitted during the PCT proceedings of the present case. Acknowledgement of its receipt is requested.

Copies of the art cited in the IDS of March 30, 2005 were not required in that the references are already of record in this application (via the PCT proceedings). Nonetheless, additional copies of non-US patent references are submitted herewith.

A substitute specification is submitted herewith to add the requested section headings.

The objection to claim 11 is respectfully traversed. The claim is clearly directed to a sorting machine including the system of claim 6. In any event, claim 11 is canceled and the only sorting machine claim now standing in the case (claim 16) is styled as an independent claim.

The 35 USC 112 rejection stated in paragraph 7 of the Office action is respectfully traversed. Numerical costs are assigned as a way of enabling a quantitative decision making. The exact value of the numerical costs is up to the operator to assign. Since they are to be assigned ahead of time by the operator (see, lines 3-5 of page 9), the values would obviously depend on how serious the operator considers the destination errors. If the operator needs to adjust the values, the operator simply does this (again, lines 3-5 of page 9).

The prior art rejections are respectfully traversed.

New claim 12 is a method claim which now includes the steps of:

identifying several delivery points from results of the recognition processing for the current mail item, the delivery points corresponding to different ambiguous solutions of the recognition processing results (see page 9, line 12 to page 10, line 11);

detecting if the delivery point is included in a single delivery round by querying a database recording several ordered lists of delivery points corresponding respectively to several delivery rounds (see original claim 1, and page 10, lines 12-16)

in response to the detection, computing a volume mail data for delivery range of the single delivery round and comparing the volume mail data to a threshold value to forward the mail item towards a sorting output (see page 11, lines 3-25).

Claim 13 is a method claim which now includes the steps of:

identifying from results of the recognition processing several delivery points corresponding to different ambiguous solutions of the recognition processing (see page 9, line 12 to page 10, line 11);

computing several cumulated extra cost values of destination error from the several delivery points, each cumulated extra cost value of destination error for a current delivery point being computed from an accumulation of cost values representing extra costs of destination error if the current mail item is delivered respectively to each one of the other delivery points instead to the current delivery point (see page 11, lines 26-36 and page 12, lines 1-4);

identifying a smallest extra cost cumulated value among the computed cumulated extra cost values and comparing the smallest cumulated extra cost value to a threshold value to forward the mail item towards a sorting output (see page 13, lines 13-25).

Claim 14 is a system claim defining a system (as described at page 6, lines 3-18) arranged to perform the features corresponding to new claim 12.

Claim 15 is a system claim defining a system (as described page 6, lines 3-18) comprising a database having recorded cost values representing extra costs of destination error associated with processing a mail item if it is delivered respectively to a wrong delivery office, to a wrong delivery round and to a wrong delivery point (see page 14, lines 18-20 and page 12, lines 2-6), and arranged to perform the features corresponding to new claim 13.

Claim 16 defines a postal sorting machine including a system for processing mail items featuring the characteristics of new claim 14.

USP6,269,171 (Gozzo) discloses a method of processing postal items using adaptive OCR exploiting any statistical characteristics of a mail stream. A static data base is used to store data based on training. Real time data for the address block, location, zip codes, etc, is collected from the mail processing equipment in order to generate a statistical information database. Based on cost models which indicate the cost of making various types of errors in the OCR process, a decision threshold is determined which is based on the real-time statistics of the mail items.

Particularly, the method utilizes a dynamic data base (72) indicative of the costs in case of an error of the OCR system (column 5, lines 47-67). It is furthermore understood from Figure 7 (and column 6, lines 3-23) that the postal codes are sorted according to an ordered list.

However, Gozzo et al. do not disclose that, in an ambiguous result of OCR, it is detected whether the possible different distribution points of the result are or are not part of a same delivery round.

US2004/0065598 (Ross) describes a method of processing postal items in which the destination address of each postal item is read automatically, and then an address data base is accessed to determine whether the address reading is ambiguous (paragraph 006). In particular, in order to disambiguate the address reading, Ross et al. propose to use the name of the addressee or any information not corresponding to the destination address. For this purpose, the method utilizes a name data base associated to the address data base. It is understood in paragraphs 8-10 that in case of an ambiguous recognition, the alternative used is the one with deeper resolution corresponding to an actual delivery point. A minimum sort assigns the five digits of zip code. A deeper sort assigns the nine digits of zip code and the most detailed sort includes three additional digits. In case of ambiguous recognition, the deepest alternative which is an actual address is used. But if there are several actual delivery points, then the mail piece is either rejected or routed towards a sorting outlet corresponding to a lesser depth of sort.

Moreover, Ross et al. does not disclose a checking of whether the alternative solutions of the ambiguous OCR (the delivery points) are or are not included in the same delivery round. Ross et al. also does not disclose a calculation of error cost values representing the additional costs

created by the delivery of an item in one of the alternative delivery points instead of a current delivery point.

Consequently, new claims 12, 14 and 16 patentably distinguish over both Gozzo and Ross in that they include the detection of whether the delivery points in an ambiguous OCR result are or are not included in a single delivery round.

Further, new claims 13 and 15 differ from both Gozzo and Ross in that they feature a calculation of the cumulated values for delivery error costs.

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

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CUSTOMER NUMBER

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